

In the Claims:

The following is a complete listing of the claims pending in the present application:

1. (Previously Presented) A system for detecting changes in the properties of a polymeric material, the system comprising:

a frame held against the outside surface of a curved polymeric test specimen;

a transmitting probe attached to said frame, wherein the transmitting probe emits critically refracted longitudinal ultrasonic waves that travel across the chord of said curved test specimen;

at least one receiving probe having a frequency lower than the transmitting probe and attached to said frame, wherein said receiving probe detects said critically refracted ultrasonic waves; and

a data processing system that measures the travel time of said critically refracted ultrasonic waves from the transmitting probe to the receiving probe and compares said measured travel time to an expected travel time, wherein the speed of said ultrasonic waves is affected by variations in material properties along the penetration path of the ultrasonic waves.

2. (Original) The system according to claim 1, further comprising:

at least one thermocouple attached to said frame that measures the temperature of the surface of said curved polymeric test specimen, wherein said temperature measurement is sent to said data processing system, wherein said measured travel time of the ultrasonic waves is adjusted to account for the effects of temperature.

3. (Original) The system according to claim 1, wherein the distance between said transmitting probe and said receiving probe may be adjusted.

4. (Previously Presented) The system according to claim 1, wherein the frequency of said critically refracted ultrasonic waves may be changed by selecting different transmit/receive combinations, wherein said receiving probe has a lower frequency than said transmitting probe.

5. (Original) The system according to claim 1, wherein said transmitting probe and said receiving probe contain silicone cores through which the critically refracted ultrasonic waves travel.

6. (Original) The system according to claim 1, wherein the curved polymeric test specimen is a container.

7. (Previously Presented) A method for detecting changes in the properties of a polymeric material, the method comprising:

holding a frame against the outside surface of a curved polymeric test specimen;

emitting critically refracted longitudinal ultrasonic waves from a transmitting probe attached to said frame, wherein said waves travel longitudinally across the chord of said curved test specimen;

detecting said critically refracted longitudinal ultrasonic waves with at least one receiving probe attached to said frame, wherein said receiving probe is of a lower frequency than the transmitting probe; and

measuring the travel time of said critically refracted ultrasonic waves from the transmitting probe to the receiving probe and comparing said measured travel time to an expected travel time, wherein the speed of said ultrasonic waves is affected by variations in material properties along the penetration path of the ultrasonic waves.

8. (Original) The method according to claim 7, further comprising:

measuring the temperature of the surface of said curved polymeric test specimen with at least one thermocouple attached to said frame; and

adjusting said measured travel time of the ultrasonic waves to account for the effects of temperature.
9. (Original) The method according to claim 7, wherein the distance between said transmitting probe and said receiving probe may be adjusted.
10. (Previously Amended) The method according to claim 7, wherein the frequency of said critically refracted ultrasonic waves may be changed by selecting different transmit/receive combinations, wherein said receiving probe has a lower frequency than said transmitting probe.
11. (Original) The method according to claim 7, wherein said transmitting probe and said receiving probe contain silicone cores through which the critically refracted ultrasonic waves travel.
12. (Original) The method according to claim 7, wherein the curved polymeric test specimen is a container.
13. (Withdrawn) A computer program for detecting changes in the properties of a polymeric material, the computer program comprising:

first instructions for measuring the travel time of critically refracted ultrasonic waves from a transmitting probe to a receiving probe, wherein said waves travel longitudinally across the chord of a curved polymeric test specimen;

second instructions for comparing said measured travel time to an expected travel time, wherein the speed of said ultrasonic waves is affected by variations in material properties along the penetration path of the ultrasonic waves.

14. (Withdrawn) The computer program according to claim 13, further comprising:
 - third instructions for measuring the temperature of the surface of said curved polymeric test specimen; and
 - fourth instructions for adjusting said measured travel time of the ultrasonic waves to account for the effects of temperature.
15. (Withdrawn) The computer program according to claim 13, wherein the curved polymeric test specimen is a container.
16. (Withdrawn) The computer program according to claim 15, further comprising
 - third instructions for receiving data about the contents of said container;
 - fourth instructions for adjusting said measured travel time of the ultrasonic waves to account for mechanical stress caused by said contents.

17. (Previously Presented) A system for evaluating the remaining service life of rotational molded polymeric tanks, the system comprising:

a frame held against the outside surface of a curved test segment of said tank;

a transmitting probe attached to said frame, wherein the transmitting probe emits critically refracted longitudinal ultrasonic waves that travel across a chord of said curved test segment;

at least one receiving probe having a frequency lower than the transmitting probe and attached to said frame, wherein said receiving probe detects said critically refracted ultrasonic waves; and

a data processing system that measures the travel time of said critically refracted ultrasonic waves from the transmitting probe to the receiving probe and compares said measured travel time to an expected travel time, wherein the speed of said ultrasonic waves is affected by variations in material properties along said chord of said curved test segment, wherein said comparison between said measured travel time and expected travel time correlates to said remaining service life.

18. (Previously Presented) The system according to claim 17, further comprising:

at least one thermocouple attached to said frame that measures the temperature of the surface of said curved test segment, wherein said temperature measurement is sent to said data processing system, wherein said measured travel time of the ultrasonic waves is adjusted to account for the effects of temperature.

19. (Previously Presented) The system according to claim 17, wherein the distance between said transmitting probe and said receiving probe is adjustable.

20. (Previously Presented) The system according to claim 17, wherein the frequency of said critically refracted ultrasonic waves may be changed by selecting different transmit/receive combinations, wherein said receiving probe has a lower frequency than said transmitting probe.

ELECTION

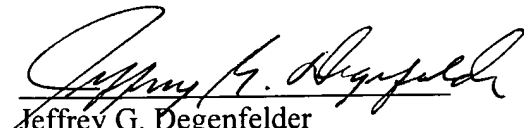
Claims 1-20 were previously pending in this application. The Examiner issued a restriction requirement pursuant to 35 U.S.C. 121 requiring the Applicants to elect a single, disclosed species for prosecution on the merits. Applicants respectfully traverse this election requirement as improper, but provisionally elects Group I, Claims 1-12 and 17-20, in order to advance the prosecution of this case, despite the fact that Applicant consider claims 13-16 as not being patentably distinct and should be examined together with claims 1-12 and 17-20. Applicants assert that these claim sets are not "distinct" as required for an election to be required.

In sum, Applicants provisionally elect to proceed with examination of claims 1-12 and 17-20, and withdraw claims 13-16 without prejudice, reserving the right to re-file these claims as part of a divisional application.

CONCLUSION

An Office Action on the merits is now respectfully awaited. If there are any outstanding issues that the Examiner feels may be resolved by way of a telephone conference, the Examiner is cordially invited to contact David W. Carstens or Jeffrey G. Degenfelder at 972.367.2001.

Respectfully submitted,


Jeffrey G. Degenfelder
Registration No. 44,647

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CARSTENS & CAHOON, LLP
PO Box 802334
Dallas, TX 75380
(972) 367-2001 Telephone
(972) 367-2002 Facsimile